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ABSTRACT

Research suggests that some of the problems faced by reluctant readers may stem from an emphasis on evaluation that precedes real instruction. At a southeastern university, the reading education program attempts to adhere to a particular sequence of methodology for working with children to prevent reading anxiety: teaching, application, practice, and then evaluation. Typically, only one child responds to a question during the application, practice, or evaluative phase, and the other children miss the opportunity to respond and be reinforced. In order for teachers to find out which children do not understand a lesson so that it can be adjusted during the reading class, students can use a multiple response technique. Each child holds up a card or marker in response to questions, indicating the appropriate answer, or whether they understand the concept, or their attitude toward an exercise. A successful sequence for oral reading involves the use of penlights to follow the text, while lists of high frequency words can be used in basic vocabulary development. Finally, in the early stages of language arts instruction, it is essential that students be provided with predictable print that can be read with success. Teachers can make read-along booklets from predictable stories such as Bill Martin's "Instant Readers" or "Sounds of Language." (HTH)

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PROVIDING DIRECT INSTRUCTION IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASS

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Providing Direct Instruction in the Language Arts Class

The term "reluctant reader" has become commonplace in our professional jargon. It refers paradoxically to the children who find one of the most pleasurable and rewarding experiences a real source of anxiety. Many reasons are cited for this hostility. They range from broken homes to television. However, it behooves us as educators to examine our materials and methodology to ascertain what we can do to reduce the number of reluctant readers in our classes.

Teaching Verses Evaluation

A recent study by Durkin (1978-79) suggests that some of our problems with reluctant readers may stem from our emphasis on evaluating rather than teaching. Durkin found that less than one percent of the time spent in reading comprehension was spent instructing. Hodges (1980) attempted to dispute those findings. Hodges also found, however, that an inordinate amount of time was spent evaluating.

These studies do not suggest that evaluation is not an important and indispensable part of our pedagogy. These studies are demonstrating that we have problems differentiating between teaching and evaluating. We have difficulty in determining when we are actually teaching and when we are evaluating. It is suggested that much of our hostility in education is caused not by evaluation, but by asking people to perform before we as educators have given students the skills and

understandings that would enable them to perform successfully. In the program at Furman, we attempt to adhere to a particular sequence of methodology in working with children to prevent this type of hostility. The sequence involves: Teaching, application, practice, and finally, evaluation.

A Sequence for Teaching and Evaluating

This writer would like to gingerly assert that the teaching of most things includes four major phases in a suggested order. These phases in rank order include instruction, application, practice, and evaluation. In the initial phase of instruction, the instructor plays the most conspicuous role while the learner plays the least obtrusive role. In this first stage, the instructors prove themselves by doing or saying something that significantly enhances the possibility of success for the learners during the later phases of application, practice, and evaluation. The process then begins to reverse itself. By the time the evaluation phase is encountered, the learner plays the most conspicuous role, with the teacher in the background. Heretofore, reading "instruction" more exuberantly emphasized the utilization of the last three phases: application, practice, and evaluation. More often than not, application has been the initial phase rather than a corollary of instruction, and not altogether unjustifiably so. The state of the art just now involves questioning of our procedures. A definition of general reading comprehension instruction will only become an empirical reality after reading researchers have evaluated

and chosen techniques that an "instructor" can efficiently and effectively use prior to application, practice and evaluation.

In the reading program at Furman University we work closely with teachers in an attempt to develop methodology that conforms to the aforesaid sequence. Generally, we have discovered that there are many different types of questions that a teacher asks daily in the classroom. Sometimes, the questions are only asked to generate interest. "Have you ever gone to a circus such as the one shown here in the story? Do you have a pet at home?" These questions are really not attempting to evaluate, but are typically used in an attempt to motivate. These questions do not require a sequence involving teaching, application, practice, and evaluation because they are not formulated in relation to specified goals. These questions are the same as asking a friend "How is your garden doing this summer?" We are not suggesting that these type questions are inappropriate. They are very appropriate.

However, we seemingly have confused this questioning strategy with "Who can tell me the sound of this vowel?" That's an evaluative question. To put this on our level, it's the same as asking "Who can give me the formula for standard deviation?" This question really requires some teaching. Students need teaching, application, and practice before evaluative questions are asked.

If only one child responds to a question in the application, practice, or evaluative phase, the other children miss the opportunity to respond and to be reinforced. If the teacher really wants to know if the class understands a certain letter-sound relationship, s/he will not

know by asking the question and calling upon one child only. The point is that if the teacher really wants to know how many children understand a concept, s/he should have all the children respond. Teachers need to know which children do not understand so that the lesson can be adjusted and feedback provided during the reading class. This can significantly reduce hostility.

Multiple-Response

One way of doing this is through the popular multiple-response technique. The following procedure is used:

1. The teacher has the students write on index cards, magic erasable slates, or scraps of paper responses such as A, B, C, D; 1, 2, 3; yes, no.

2. Then after teaching, the teacher has children apply, practice, and offer evaluative information by raising the appropriate answer. "One of these words has a short vowel pattern that I have taught you. Is it word A, B, C, or D. Please respond." Students immediately hold their cards before them as the teacher quickly scans the answers. The teacher then immediately gives feedback. "The answer is 'B' because . . . ."

3. The teacher can obtain immediate information for determining when to terminate the teaching phase of her methodology by saying, "When I say 'Respond', I want each of you to raise an 'A' if you now understand how to recognize a short vowel pattern, a 'B' if you want me to show you again with different words, or 'C' if you

want to ask a question." After all the students pick an answer, the teacher says "Respond" and acts accordingly.

4. A teacher can also measure attitudes and emotional responses to a particular lesson or exercise by having students respond in some such way as the following:

   A. This is boring.

   B. I like this and would want to do it again.

   C. I can live with this.

Sequence for Oral Reading

We have also attempted to identify a sequence for oral reading success. All are familiar with the potential disaster that can occur in oral reading, and the subsequent hostility that may develop toward reading.

In working with our most reluctant readers, we have had more success with short passages of high interest. The teacher explains to the child or group of children that s/he is going to teach them to read the passage as they follow the words with their fingers or pen lights. The teacher then reads the paragraph slowly and distinctly as the children follow the words. The teacher then says, "Now I'm going back to the beginning of the paragraph. I will read one sentence at a time and I want you to echo me as you follow with your pen lights or fingers. You will be my echo as soon as I finish the sentence." The third phase has the student go back and read the paragraph silently. The student asks the teacher any words that still cause problems. The

children are then asked to read the paragraph orally to each other in pairs. So the sequence involves the following:

1. Teacher reads paragraph to students,
2. Teacher reads sentence and children echo,
3. Children read paragraph silently,
4. Children read paragraph orally to each other or to the teacher.

Notice the difference in this and simply asking a reluctant reader to read. Input precedes output. If we are to reduce hostility, we must be cognizant of our role before initiating action on the part of the student.

Activities for the Most Reluctant of Readers

Pen Lights

We have found that most reluctant readers enjoy using a pen light to follow the words as they read. These lights have switches that can be depressed and released in such an easy manner so as to allow fluid movement along a line of print with each word being seen clearly.

The teacher should use the light first and have students watch on the board or chart as she reads a line of print. S/he will release the switch after each word so that the light goes off between words. S/he simply presses on the pen for the light to appear on the next word. The teacher can then have each student follow with their pens on a duplicated sheet as s/he reads again. Next, the teacher can have the students echo the sentence. Students then read the sentences silently

with their lights, and finally orally. The teacher moves around the group offering assistance. So the sequence involves the following procedure:

1. Teacher uses the light on the board or chart as s/he reads and children follow.
2. Students follow the teacher's reading on a duplicated sheet using pen lights.
3. Students echo the teacher as they follow with pen lights on their duplicated sheets.
4. Students read sentences silently and ask for the teacher's help on words that are still difficult.
5. Students are divided into pairs and read the sentences orally as they follow with pen lights.

This simple procedure has helped maintain interest with students of all ages.

Basic Sight Vocabulary Development

Most students enter into the language arts curriculum with a speaking vocabulary of high frequency English words. All students must learn to read these words instantly because all writers use these words of highest frequency repeatedly.

We have been attempting to identify ways of reducing hostility in this phase of our language arts teaching. We have had success with reluctant readers by using our instant word lists to identify which words need to be taught, and by then following a certain sequence.

Teachers can also begin by using a language experience chart because regardless of content, form, or cultural differences, many of the words used by children, youth, nonreading adults, and prominent authors will be the same. The high frequency words will appear naturally in the language experience charts.

Let's suppose that the teacher has identified five words that s/he wants the most reluctant beginning readers to know. S/he can begin by saying, "This word is dog. I will use it in a sentence. My dog is sick. Now when you give me a sentence with dog, I will write it down on this chart." A child responds, "The dog was killed." The teacher writes that sentence on the chart. S/he continues this sequence until all five sentences are recorded and numbered one through five.

The teacher can then read the sentences aloud as s/he follows with her pen light. The teacher needs to quickly write a duplicate chart to be cut in parts before the children. S/he has students read along and s/he reads aloud as the five sentences are recorded on a duplicate chart. This, or course, can be done on paper if the teacher is working individually with students.

The teacher then says, "I am now going to cut this second chart into separate sentences and scramble them. Watch me as I choose one and match it with the correct sentence on the board. This sentence says 'My dog was killed. It goes with this sentence right here on our first chart. I am now going to choose a sentence and show it to you. I want you to look at our first chart and tell me if this is number 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 that I am holding. Ready, respond." All children can then raise the

number that they think matches the sentence. The teacher then reads the sentence and has children echo.

The teacher can then follow a similar pattern with phrases. The phrase on the first chart can be divided and lettered such as the following. My$^{(a)}$dog | was$^{(b)}$killed. The teacher should read aloud the phrases as s/he is dividing them. The teacher says "I am going to cut or fold these sentences into phrases and will scramble them. (If the same sentence strips are to be used again, the teacher can simply fold them.) Watch me as I pick a phrase and match it with the first chart." The teacher then picks a phrase from the scrambled pile and asks all students to respond on a signal by raising the letter a, b, c, etc. which corresponds to the appropriate phrase.

This idea of matching can be applied also to words. The same sequence is followed for example, by putting capital letters over each word, or by numbering each word and asking children to respond by matching the word shown by the teacher with the appropriate number on the chart.

It is suggested that matching of sentences, phrases, and words is the least difficult for students. The next most difficult activity seems to be recognition of a sentence, phrase, or word without the original stimulus visible. For example, using the same five sentences, teachers can show children how to look at a sentence strip, remove it, and then pick the sentence they saw from the original chart by raising multiple response cards. This recognition, after the stimulus sentence has been removed, can be used with phrases and finally with words.

After recognition, identification seems to be the next natural phase. The teacher shows students how to listen as s/he reads a sentence and identifies the sentence that was read aloud. Students then are asked to correctly identify the sentence that was read aloud by raising the appropriate response card. Notice that the original chart is visible throughout these activities.

The last stage of pronunciation has the children in pairs reading the sentences orally. Later, phrases in random order, and words out of context can be pronounced orally. The children read orally to each other as the teacher offers assistance. Notice that the assumption is made that matching, recognizing, identifying, and pronouncing whole sentences is easier than phrases. It is also assumed that the words out of context are more difficult than the whole sentences or phrases on the chart.

In summary, to follow this sequence the following procedure is used:

1. Teach children how to match sentences, recognize sentences after the stimulus sentence has been removed, identify sentences read by the teacher, and finally read sentences orally in pairs.
2. Teach children how to match phrases, recognize phrases after the stimulus phrase has been removed, identify phrases read by the teacher, and finally read phrases orally to a partner.
3. Teach children how to match words, to visually recognize words after the stimulus word has been removed, and to finally pronounce words in random order to a partner.

Predictive Patterns of Print

In the early stages of language arts instruction, it is essential that students be provided with predictable print that can be read with success. Students need the opportunity to read some print that does not require "sounding out."

This can be accomplished with reluctant readers. The teacher simply picks a book that has very predictable print such as Bill Martin's Instant Readers (1970) or Sounds of Language (1974). The teacher reads the book and emphasizes the predictable print. S/he can then make a simple experience chart with the children giving the predictable parts.

Our book was about weather.

When it rains, it rains.

When it snows, it snows.

When it fogs, it fogs, etc.

These patterns can be placed on duplicated sheets for students to read, or even be placed into little stapled booklets for the children.

At Furman, teachers are making read-along booklets from these predictable stories. The teacher, or the student if capable, writes the stories in the little booklets. The teacher can duplicate the stories if s/he desires. Children then tape themselves reading the passage. The result is read-along books with predictable print.

This paper has attempted to give some specific suggestions for working with very reluctant readers. All these activities have been used successfully in reducing hostility of the most anxious readers. It is hoped that classroom teachers can apply some of these methods with their own classes.

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